

The imperial welfare state?

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The Imperial Welfare State? Decolonization, education and professional interventions on immigrant children in Birmingham, 1948-1971

Abstract: This article approaches debates about how the history of the post-1945 English welfare state might be written. It argues that professionals' interventions on immigrant children can serve as a prism for understanding the crafting of the modern English welfare state. In this sense the article engages with the narrative about the resilience of a post-war British history which sees 1945 as a moment of profound rupture symbolized by the demise of Empire, the development of a universal welfare state, the coming of mass immigration that brought with it social problems whose management presaged a distinctive British multiculturalism.

Due to its influential impact on the development of immigrant education policies in England and because of its extensive education archive the article uses the Birmingham Local Education Administration (LEA) as an empirical and historical case. The significant British Nationality Act of 1948 and the Immigration Act of 1971 serve as demarcations of the period treated.

The article concludes that the immigrant child, and the child's background, were consistently presented as educational problems and as the cause of both poor academic attainment and a more intangible unwillingness to assimilate. In this lens the crafting of the post-war English welfare state was a continuation of an imperial project shoring up imperial boundaries within as the former colonized appeared on English soil.

Key words: Welfare state, intercultural education, professionals, decolonization, immigrants, state-crafting

Introduction

This article investigates English welfare state professionals' interventions towards immigrant children serving as a prism for understanding the crafting of the modern English welfare state in general and educational practices and policies in particular. Professionals in this sense are agents who work on behalf of the public good and who add to the reproduction and construction of the state through their actions. This thought is inspired by the sociological

work of Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár – drawing on Durkheim and Bourdieu – and the theoretical implication is that professionals invoke their symbolic capital to shape the workings of the state.¹ At the empirical level, the implication is that professionals can be understood as people capable of acting competently and legitimately on behalf of the public good, and who can draw on the state's symbolic capital to justify their interventions.² In short, professionals are those who draw on, manage, conquer, and shape statist capital; they do so in what can be understood as their boundary work with 'the other', namely, those who fall outside the boundaries of what Farzana Shain has called 'unacceptable otherness'.³

Employing an analytical focus on professionals' interventions vis-à-vis the immigrant child in order to discern the boundaries of unacceptable otherness the article provides a preliminary assessment of whether education professionals had, in their socialisation as professionals, developed a racialised world view that conditioned not only the education of immigrant children in the period 1948 to 1971, but also the production of social roles available to particular groups of immigrants and their children.

In developing this analysis, the article necessarily approaches debates about how the history of the post-1945 English welfare state might be written. A separate publication reviews these debates in more detail.⁴ Here it is necessary only to note the resilience of a post-war British history which sees 1945 as a moment of profound rupture symbolized by the demise of Empire, the development of a universal welfare state, the coming of mass immigration that brought with it social problems whose management presaged a distinctive British multiculturalism. The article engages with this narrative in at least three ways.

Firstly, it subjects the mythic universalism of the welfare state to some critical analysis. Citizens may have acquired new social rights in the fields of education, housing, work and welfare but the category of citizenship, and who could really belong to the English nation,

¹ Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár, 'The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences'. *Annual Review of Sociology* 28, no. 1 (2002): 167–95.

² Bolette Moldenhawer and Trine Øland, 'Disturbed by "the Stranger": State Crafting Remade through Educational Interventions and Moralisation'. *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 11, no. 3 (1 September 2013): 398–420.

³ Trine Øland and Christian Ydesen, 'Professional Interventions as a State-Crafting Grammar: Using a Sociological Concept of State in Historical Research'. In *Challenging Ideas? Theory and Empirical Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015); Farzana Shain, "Race, nation and education - An overview of British attempts to 'manage diversity' since the 1950s", *Education Inquiry*, vol. 4, No. 1, 2013, 63–85.

⁴ Kevin Myers and Christian Ydesen, 'A new historical epoch? Decolonization and British multiculturalism in history, education and memory', Forthcoming 2017.

was a matter of sustained contestation. In formal politics, but also in the mundane operation of welfare services, politicians, policymakers and professionals delineated the characteristics of the good citizen. Politically, the movement from the 1948 British Nationality Act, which affirmed an imperial citizenship with rights of settlement in the UK for all commonwealth citizens, to the restrictive 1971 Immigration Act, which removed those rights, enshrined 'different communities of Britishness'.⁵ As we will begin to demonstrate, in the period from 1948 to 1971 welfare state professionals played an important but to date largely unacknowledged role, in the continued racialization of English identity; although some new lines of distinction were added. For as professionals counted, categorised and worked on immigrant children they also worked out who could ultimately belong, and how, to the English nation in terms of 'social' – as opposed to 'political' - citizenship.⁶

Secondly, the article joins some recent work in attempting to focus on professional practice rather than on high politics or elite policymaking. It follows Jordanna Bailkin in identifying processes of decolonisation and immigration as fundamental to the design and practices of the English welfare state in the 1950s and 1960s.⁷ This is because Commonwealth citizens arriving in Britain were 'bearers not only of the colonial past, but also of the decolonizing present'. Using conceptual frameworks developed for the study and administration of the British Empire, professionals tended to view immigrants as problems to be managed and contained.⁸ Using the theoretical concept of state-crafting implying that the actions taken by professionals define how the state operates in practice this article moves beyond the discursive level and looks at the instruments of education professionals' interventions; e.g. categorizations, tests, evaluations, statistics, and pedagogical interventions.

Thirdly, the article treats race concepts, ideas and propositions as items in the cultural system, generated by social actors and the products of sociocultural interaction.⁹ Race is understood

⁵ Diane Sainsbury, *Welfare States and Immigrant Rights – The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 37; Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era* (London: Cornell University Press, 1997).

⁶ Thomas H. Marshall, *Citizenship and social class and other essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950); Ben Revi, "T.H. Marshall and his critics: reappraising 'social citizenship' in the twenty-first century", *Citizenship Studies* 18 (3-4), 452-464.

⁷ Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012).

⁸ Shain, *Race, nation and education...*

⁹ Bob Carter, *Realism and Racism: concepts of race in sociological research* (London: Routledge, 2008), 82-91. See also Bob Carter and Satnam Virdee, 'Racism and the sociological imagination' *The British Journal of Sociology* 59, 4 (2008).

not as ‘a timeless, unchanging essence’,¹⁰ and the related understanding that race ideas are available, and variously spurned or taken up by social actors, leads to a concern with the times and places in which actors come to interpret the world in racialised terms.¹¹

These three engagements with the existing narrative about the English welfare state form the backbone of coining and exploring the concept of the ‘imperial welfare state’ as indicated in our article headline.

The historical case study and article structure

In pursuing the focus on professionals’ practice the article offers a case study of educational practice specifically in the context of decolonisation and mass immigration. The case study focuses on the city of Birmingham which can be considered a key case, and one of inherent interest, because it was, and it remains, one of the largest local government units in the UK. It also had one of the largest post 1945 settlements of immigrants in the United Kingdom. But there are also more pragmatic reasons for selecting Birmingham. The Wolfson Centre for Archival Research at the Library of Birmingham holds excellent archival records relating to the topic ‘Immigrant Education’ in the period from the 1940s through to the 1970s. These records formed the basis of Ian Grosvenor’s detailed history of policy making in the Birmingham Local Education Authority in this period and his convincing demonstration of how “black children, families, teachers and community organisations were all viewed by white policy-makers, education officers and managers in a profoundly racialised way.”¹² The task here is to complement and further that analysis by looking at the nuts and bolts of educational interventions as an approach to understanding the workings of the state. The article will approach the research carefully bringing the theoretical concepts of ‘state-crafting’ and boundaries of ‘unacceptable otherness’ into dialogue with the relevant archival sources. The sources used contain committee minutes, newspaper clippings, the Birmingham LEA’s internal and external communication, professional’s notes, recordings and decisions about immigrant children and their families including descriptions of the condition of

¹⁰ Kevin Stenson, “The state, sovereignty and advanced marginality in the city” In: Squires, Peter & Lea, John *Criminalisation and advanced marginality – critically exploring the work of Loïc Wacquant* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2012), 41-60, 43f.

¹¹ Satnam Virdee, *Racism, Class and the Racialized Outsider* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

¹² Ian Grosvenor, *Assimilating identities - Racism and educational policy in post 1945 Britain* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1997), 139.

children's homes, and corrective interventions and sanctions undertaken by schools and their associated professionals.

The remaining parts of the article are structured according to two recurring themes deduced from the sources: '*Language, body and intelligence*' (pertaining to the individual person or groups of persons) and '*culture, traditions and values*' (pertaining to the contextual background and socialisation of the individual person or groups of persons). These themes constitute two key areas in which Birmingham LEA professionals' categorizations, interventions and justifications in terms of the immigrant child are in evidence. Analysing these themes is a sufficient condition for gaining explanatory power in terms of understanding the boundaries of unacceptable otherness and the state-crafting processes in the Birmingham LEA in the period covered.

The analytical outset

In keeping with recent work in cultural history, it is important to locate welfare state professionals in the time and space of an imperial nation or in what Bill Schwarz has called the 'imagined geographies of empire'.¹³ The recurring professionals in evidence in the sources – teachers, head teachers, education welfare and attendance officers, social workers, educational psychologists and medical doctors¹⁴ – grew up, trained and lived in a world where the British Empire was a banal and every day presence. Empire was displayed and consumed in a whole range of cultural products, in paintings, prints, photographs, newspapers and exhibitions, that helped give shape and meaning to the imperial British world.¹⁵ If for some historians this culture of empire had no discernible impact on domestic Britain, produced no fixed sense of racial or cultural difference and could simply be ignored, this article adopts a different preliminary position.¹⁶ The alternative starting point, based on a

¹³ Bill Schwarz, *The White Man's World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 10.

¹⁴ In 1967 the Immigrant Registration Centre Officers entered the gallery of professionals when two registration centres for immigrant children in Birmingham - located in Sparkhill and Margaret Street respectively - were inaugurated. Birmingham City Archives (BCA), Registration and Medical Inspection of Immigrant Pupils [Sept 1967 – Oct 1968], Letter from Dr. Lemin to Mr. Rankin dated 22nd September 1967.

¹⁵ J. McAleer and J. M. Mackenzie (eds), *Exhibiting the Empire: Cultures of display and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); B. Crosbie and M. Hampton (eds), *The Cultural Construction of the British World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

¹⁶ Bernard Porter, *British Imperial: What the Empire wasn't* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015); David Cannadine *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire* (London: Penguin, 2001)

growing body of scholarship, is that a world suffused with imperial images, objects and knowledge is likely to have had some impact on professional identities and practices. The extent of any such impact certainly requires much more research not least into specific processes of professional socialisation and into the reflexivity, or the symbolic worlds and mental deliberations, of different kinds of professionals. Yet, there is emerging evidence for the claim that Empire was central to the professionalization of both welfare and the social sciences that underpinned it. In a variety of academic fields, from anthropology to sociology, from psychological to social work, scholars identified ‘new syndromes and pathologies’ accompanying decolonization and they advised states on how to manage the demands of what was presented as a new world.¹⁷ In other words, professional knowledge was collated, assembled and understood in imperial frameworks.¹⁸ A philosophy of service and social amelioration formed against a background of the British Empire. Professionals, including doctors, nurses and teachers, often had direct experience of working in imperial settings but even when this was not the case, ideologies of freedom and development, of tutelage for and tolerance of, all the peoples in the British Empire was a central part of the professional role.¹⁹

Professionals lived in a world in which racial taxonomies that placed British culture, and perhaps specifically English people, at the top of a hierarchy were routine. However, race ideas have to be promoted and enacted to be influential. Professionals in the period after 1948 were crucial to this promotion because they held a prerogative to define the boundaries of unacceptable otherness. This is because, and again following the work of Bill Schwarz, with “immigration the colonial frontier came home”.²⁰ When immigrants arrived in Britain the language of the colonies came with it. Moreover, it did so at the very moment when decolonisation helped to popularise the idea of a distinctly embattled white ethnicity. The British were variously represented as a noble people retiring from Empire with objectives

¹⁷ Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, p.7.

¹⁸ G. Steinmetz, ‘A Child of the Empire: British Sociology and Colonialism, 1940-1960s’, *Journal of the History of Behavioural Sciences*, 49, 4 (2013): 353-378; G. Steinmetz, ‘Defensive Anthropology’, *Postcolonial Studies*, 17, 4 (2014): 436-450. T. Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks and the British Academic World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

¹⁹ H. Sweet and Sue Hawkins (eds), *Colonial Caring: A history of colonial and post-colonial nursing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

²⁰ Bill Schwarz, “The only white man in there’: the re-racialisation of England, 1956-1968”, *Race & Class*, 31, 1 (1996): 73.

complete or a depleted and embattled ethnicity who had lost conviction in their imperial role. In either representation, being white became central and fundamental to the idea of being British.

One result of this moment of decolonisation, in which a recharged and intensified sense of a deep England under threat, was that dealing with immigrant children and their families was generally viewed in explicitly racial terms.²¹ Even relatively small numbers of immigrants were demonised as invasions and a pervasive obsession with assimilation permeates discussions about the consequences of immigration.²² So when, for example, in February 1968 Councillor Mitton spoke to the Birmingham Education Committee he urged his colleagues, and especially the professionals present, to honestly state the consequences of immigration were going to be.

*It is one of the most urgent problems upon us – they are coming in a rate of 1000 a week. I understand that in Parliament there is strong support for treating this as a case of emergency and limiting or even stopping Kenyan inflow. We are going to be the people who are going to bear the brunt of it.*²³

This clearly anticipates Enoch Powell's infamous 'rivers of blood' speech delivered just over two months later also in the city of Birmingham.²⁴ Specifically, the term 'people' is imagined, implicitly at least, as both specifically white and populist. Professionals are addressed as people who, bounded by ideologies of service and tolerance, may hide the apparently self-evident truths of race. The appeal to truth and honesty is an implicit recognition of another set of responses to immigration in this period. A consistent concern in the archival records consulted for this article is with demonstrating tolerance or trying to ensure that actions could not be perceived as racially prejudice. This confirms the accuracy of David Feldman's argument that the idea of tolerance was an important feature of responses to

21 As pointed out by Ian Grosvenor "(...) the Town Clerk reported to the Special Purposes Sub-Committee that officers of the Corporation and the Chief Constable believed there was 'a coloured population problem' in Birmingham" as early as 1952. Grosvenor, *Assimilating identities...*, 110.

22 Frank Reeves, *British Racial Discourse: A Study of British Political Discourse about Race and Race-Related Matters*. Comparative Ethnic and Race Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

23 Birmingham City Archives (BCA), Registration and Medical Inspection of Immigrant Pupils [Sept 1967 – Oct 1968], Draft for minutes from education committee meeting held February 15, 1968.

24 Enoch Powell (1912-1998), conservative MP for Wolverhampton South West, made a speech at the General Meeting of the West Midlands Area Conservative Political Centre in April 1968 commonly known as the 'Rivers of blood' speech. The speech, expressing very critical views towards immigration to the UK, reverberated across the political landscape and made Powell a very controversial figure in UK political life.

immigrants precisely because it was a central component of the national imaginary.²⁵ It may be that for professionals the idea of tolerance, and a concern for non-discriminatory forms of practice, proved more resilient than in other sections of the population. In short, and analytically, professionals working in Birmingham drew, as is the case for all agents, on a complex mix of traditions and ideas that included the culture and socialization of their professional group. Specialized knowledge, and underlying knowledge regimes, can serve as legitimizing emblems of interventions (i.e. symbolic capital), which are important elements in conditioning responses to immigrants.

Embodied deficiency

The Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council (CIAC) was established in 1962 to advise the Home Office, on policy measures that would promote both the welfare of Commonwealth immigrants and their integration in Britain. Most scholars agree that the CIAC was an influential body and one which worked to reduce immigrant visibility in Britain and encourage assimilation to the host community.²⁶ The CIAC's Second Report, focusing on education and information and published in December 1963, begins by making some claims, all of them contestable, about the unprecedented volume and character of contemporary immigration and the alleged problems in schools caused by immigrants who were 'visibly distinguishable by the colour of their skin' and 'coming from societies whose habits and customs are very different from those in Britain'.²⁷ A familiar historical chronology, and a normative schema, is constructed in which past immigrants are misremembered as more similar, the British more tolerant and the world more ordered than the restless, troubling present. Specifically troubling the authors were of the arrival of an estimated 500,000 black immigrants, many of whom would not return home, settle in 'concentrated areas' that can 'hardly fail' to produce 'social problems'.

It is worth stressing that several authors of the report had personal experiences of some of those societies and/or were steeped in traditions of philanthropic social action central to the

²⁵ David Feldman, 'Why the English like turbans: a history of multiculturalism in one country' in D. Feldman and J. Lawrence (eds.) *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Roberta Bivins, *Contagious Communities: Medicine, Migration, and the NHS in Post War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

²⁶ Roy Lowe, *Schooling and Social Change, 1964-1990* (London: Routledge, 1997): 118f.

²⁷ Home Office, Second Report of the Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council, London 1964, para. 5.

development of Empire. Stella Isaacs, better remembered as the founder of the Royal Voluntary Service, served in the Viceroy of India's Office in Delhi in the 1920s; Philip Mason was a devoted Christian, senior member of the Indian Civil Service until its independence and then an influential author and race relations adviser; Archibald Nye was a senior military figure, the last governor of Madras and then UK High Commissioner to India and then Canada; Majorie Nicholson previously worked at the Fabian Colonial Bureau and conducted fieldwork in West Africa.²⁸ Their joint determination to view social problems as directly attributable to race, and the fear that underpins the document, helps to consolidate the black immigrant as a potentially subversive figure in need of intervention and surveillance. This is one reason why education featured prominently in the work of the CIAC and why, teachers, for so long central to the project of nation building, are presented as embattled figures, praised for their 'devoted' and 'anxious' efforts, yet overwhelmed by academic, social and cultural problems.

The first substantive theme addressed by the CIAC report was the teaching of English. The 'speedy and efficient teaching of English to those immigrant children who do not already know it' was a first and vital need because it was a precondition for the process of assimilation. However, and despite 'the devoted efforts of teachers', there were insufficient numbers of teachers and too many demands made on their time by immigrant pupils. The resulting conflation of immigrant pupils with a decline in educational standards became a key theme in media reporting of the 1960s and the CIAC lend weight to the argument by noting that "the presence of a high proportion of immigrant children in one class slows down the general routine of working and hampers the progress of the whole class, especially where the immigrants do not speak or write English fluently."²⁹ Thus, the localized concentration of immigrants in some areas was interpreted as inherently threatening to educational standards. In reality, of course, complaints about the presence of immigrants were highly selective and racialised ones. For despite the large numbers of white Europeans arriving in Britain by the 1960s both the notion of an immigrant and the idea of immigration increasingly denoted a

²⁸ Anthony Farrar-Hockley, 'Nye, Sir Archibald Edward (1895–1967)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011; <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35272>, accessed 4 Dec 2015 Patricia M. Pugh, 'Nicholson, Marjorie (1914–1997)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/63673>, accessed 4 December 2015].

²⁹ Home Office, Second Report of the Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council, London 1964, para. 25. Cf. Shain, Race, nation and education... 717.

black or Asian person.³⁰ Studies of racialization have tended to concentrate on elite policymaking circles but local archival records, such as those examined here, illuminate processes in which local actors draw widely on race ideas but begin to apply them increasingly selectively, but by no means exclusively, to black people in Britain. A 1963 memo of the Byelaws department,³¹ unambiguously explained the presence of race taxonomies in the imagination of professionals by ranking immigrants “(...) in the following merit order starting from the top: (1) Jamaicans, (2) Indians and Pakistanis, (3) Mediterranean, (4a) Irish, (4b) Irish Tinkers.”³² In the same year there is evidence to suggest that the Birmingham Education Committee began a “local count of ‘All Non-European’ pupils”³³. Guidance issued to head teachers in 1964 and 1965, possibly in connection with this local count, explained that:

Whether or not to classify a child as an “immigrant” for the purpose of this enquiry must be in some measure a matter for the Head’s own judgement but you are asked to use the following as a guide:

- (a) All pupils of non-European stock (one or both parents) should be regarded as “immigrants” even if they were born here.*
- (b) European children – and this applies especially to Irish children – should be regarded “immigrants” (wherever born) if their background leads to any substantial difficulties or problems, educational or social.*

*If, however, they are well enough assimilated to fit in to the school without special help or consideration, educational or social, they should not be regarded as “immigrants” for the purpose of this enquiry.*³⁴

³⁰ Wendy Webster, Immigration and Racism in Paul Addison and Harriet Jones (eds.) *A Companion to Contemporary Britain* (Blackwell, 2007), 101.

³¹ Local authorities and certain other bodies have powers under various Acts of Parliament to make byelaws, which are essentially local laws designed to deal with local issues.

³² BCA, Education Committee, Educational Problems of Immigration, Teaching of English to immigrant children, March 1960-March 1966, Memo for Mr. Brooksbank dated October 24 October 1963.

³³ BCA, Registration and Medical Inspection of Immigrant Pupils [Sept 1967 – Oct 1968], Note from Assistant Education Officer, Primary Education, Mr. W.M.M. Chapman to the Chief Education Officer dated 8 January 1970. BCA, Reception Centres for Immigrant Pupils Also Articles regarding Scheme for Dispersal of Immigrants (To Aug. 1967), Return of Immigrant Pupils: Comparative Tables 1966 and 1967.

³⁴ BCA, Registration and Medical Inspection of Immigrant Pupils [Sept 1967 – Oct 1968], Note from Mr. Stickland to the Chief Education Officer entitled “Immigration: Letter from Mr. Enoch Powell” dated 8th January 1970.

This quotation demonstrates that all immigrants were regarded as potential problems but that a distinction was increasingly drawn between Europeans and other immigrants.³⁵ While European, and especially Irish children, might be expected to experience social and educational difficulties because of their backgrounds, this was simply assumed in the case of children of ‘non-European stock’.

One response to the assumed social and educational consequences of New Commonwealth immigration was the establishment of reception centres. R. D. Chapman, the Head of Department of English for Immigrants at the Birmingham Education Committee, addressed the topic in November 1965, partly in response to the public campaigning of local head teachers.³⁶ By 1967 the National Union of Teachers (NUT) was openly advocating English language provision, cultural training and medical checks at reception centres for a period of between three and twelve months.³⁷ A detailed and important contemporary study of Sparkbrook, an urban area with high concentrations of Irish, West Indian and Pakistani immigration, found teachers there bitter about the deprived conditions in which they worked and frustrated by the disproportionate amount of time devoted to cleanliness, tidiness, manners, respect for authority and standard English, tasks they saw as socialization processes that belonged in the home.³⁸ If the teachers’ professional role, as reported by Rex and Moore, focused on their ‘putting over a certain set of value (Christian), a code of behaviour (middle-class) and a set of academic and job aspirations’, immigrants, especially but not only black immigrants, appear as obstacles in their quest to ‘imbue children with a sense of national identity, democratic values, law-abiding behaviour and participation in civic life’.³⁹ “Jamaicans”, Miss F.S. Teague told her head teacher colleagues in December 1962, “are

³⁵ See e.g. BCA, Reception Centres for Immigrant Pupils Also Articles regarding Scheme for Dispersal of Immigrants (To Aug. 1967), immigration statistics.

³⁶ David Winkley, *Handsworth Revolution: The Odyssey of a School* (London: de la Mare, 2002), 7-8.

³⁷ BCA, Reception Centres for Immigrant Pupils Also Articles regarding Scheme for Dispersal of Immigrants (To Aug. 1967), memorandum entitled “Education Centres for Non-English Speaking Immigrants of Secondary Age” written by Mr. Hey mentioning a memo entitled “Initial Reception Centres for Immigrants” written by Mr. R.D. Chapman in November 1965. ‘Reception Centres Urged for Immigrant Children’ Times, 27 January 1967, 9.

³⁸ John Rex and Robert Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict: a study of Sparkbrook* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 237-38.

³⁹ Peter Cunningham, *Politics and the Primary Teacher* (Abingon: Routledge, 2012): 42. See also Ian Grosvenor & Martin Lawn (2001) ‘This is who we are and this is what we do’: teacher identity and teacher work in mid-twentieth century english educational discourse, *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 9:3, 355-370.

temperamental and [their] timidity can quickly change to hysterical aggressive behaviour or to babyish petulance.”⁴⁰

Teachers’ concern to protect their civilizing mission meant that they not only often advocated for reception centres and a policy of dispersing immigrant children across Birmingham but also for increased medical regulation. At a meeting with the education department in January 1967 Birmingham teachers pointed out with vexation that “(...) in general immigrants are keen to have their children go to school but evasive about sending them to the doctor.”⁴¹ Early intervention was a priority giving rise to pre-school medical inspections and early registration arrangements performed by Immigrant Registration Centre Officers, school nurses, school doctors and social workers. Indeed, the Birmingham Education Committee made admission to school conditional on medical inspection in the Margaret Street or Sparkhill reception centre.⁴²

The archives of the Birmingham Education Committee amply demonstrate a discursive naming and a spatial organization of the black immigrant child. In the areas of language teaching and medical health, professionals worked to protect an imagined white nation from a contagion that threatened to overwhelm it. Yet it was arguably in judgments around intelligence that the power and elite knowledge of professionals may have been decisive. This is because the consistent inability of researchers to adequately define, to measure or to develop persuasive empirical evidence for an inherited intelligence places it squarely in the realm of society and culture. The idea of inherited and innate intelligence was a crucial part of the symbolic capital possessed by professionals in their attempt to order a restless and dynamic post-war world.⁴³ This helps why it is such a persistent source of effort and concern among the professionals who populate this archive.

⁴⁰ BCA, Education Committee, Educational Problems of Immigration, Teaching of English to immigrant children, March 1960-March 1966, Seminar on the educational problems of immigration.

⁴¹ BCA, Registration and Medical Inspection of Immigrant Pupils [Sept 1967 – Oct 1968], letter from Mr. Chapman concerning a meeting with Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Mr. Dennis Howell in connection with Circular 7/65, dated 28 September 1967.

⁴² BCA, Registration and Medical Inspection of Immigrant Pupils [Sept 1967 – Oct 1968], Memorandum entitled “Registration, Medical Examination and Admission to Schools of Immigrant Children newly arrived in this country” dated 25 October 1967.

⁴³ Christian Ydesen, ‘Crafting the English Welfare State—interventions by Birmingham Local Education Authorities, 1948–1963’. *British Educational Research Journal*, 1 January 2016, n/a – n/a. doi:10.1002/berj.3223; Leslie Spenser Hearnshaw, *Cyril Burt, Psychologist* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1979).

In 1964, for example, the Head Teacher of Westminster Junior School sent a private and confidential 'Report on the problems posed by immigrant children' to the Chief Education Officer. In the cover letter the Head Teacher wrote "Because I think they are relevant, I have attached a chart showing relative I.Q's of our immigrant children (...)." ⁴⁴ Similarly, in 1965 the Chief Education Officer wrote a letter that featured significant interventions from specialist educational professionals. One was from the leader of the Education Committee's team of 15 visiting teachers of non-English speaking pupils who argued vigorously for the use of tests within the Remedial Teaching Service and observing in passing that any such "test would presumably need to include some form of intelligence test to diagnose whether difficulties are due to low intelligence or lack of suitable opportunity to learn." Another intervention in the Chief Education Officer's letter came in the form of the Education Committee's Senior Educational Psychologist who concurred that the "The Remedial Teaching Service could make extensive use of a Test which could give some indication of the level at which a West Indian child is able to approach the subject of Reading. (...) It is not appreciated that their immature minds have more difficulty in understanding *our* language and speech." ⁴⁵

These examples indicate that intelligence served as a key marker in terms of categorizing and making decisions about the handling of immigrant children. In the first example intelligence quotients even served as documentation for general problems with the whole group of immigrant children and not only as an indicator of individual abilities. In spite of budding critiques, not least by Brian Simon, psychometric measurement of intelligence quotients remained a widespread practice and, as was indicated above, they continued to be used proactively in schools as an apparently valid and scientific way of objectively knowing the intellectual ability of both individuals and groups. ⁴⁶ The concept of intelligence, and the practice of intelligence testing, was deployed by professionals as an authoritative tool. Intelligence carried with it the scientific aura that allowed professionals to make seemingly neutral judgements about individuals or populations groups. These judgements were

⁴⁴ BCA. Education Committee, Working Papers, Immigrant Population, Private and confidential letter from a head teacher at Westminster Junior School to the Chief Education Officer dated August 13, 1964

⁴⁵ BCA, Education Committee, Immigrant population, Working Papers, private and confidential letter from Mr. W.M.M. Chapman to Mr. H.R. Russel of the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales dated 29th November 1965 (our emphasis).

⁴⁶ Brian Simon, *Intelligence Testing and the Comprehensive School*, (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 1953); Deborah Thom (2004) Politics and the people: Brian Simon and the campaign against intelligence tests in British schools, *History of Education*, 33:5, 515-529.

explained and justified by reference to systems of knowledge, to psychology but also medicine, and they were exercised in the name of institutional order and educational standards. Yet the frequency with which damning statements about immigrants are found in the archives, from the ‘immature minds of West Indian children’ to the delinquency of the Irish or the cleanliness of Pakistanis, is a clear indication of the process of racialization at work. In the archives examined for this article, immigrant children were attributed the characteristics of different races or cultures which were, in turn, embodied in packages of deficiencies that required pedagogical intervention. Immigrant bodies were, in other words, the site on which mental, emotional and behavioural routines were inscribed by professionals whose knowledge, training and dispositions had links to the project of Empire. The struggle against those judgements, and the attempt to decolonize the immigrant body, would be a major theme of educational politics in the last three decades of the twentieth century.⁴⁷

An organized melting pot of assimilation

In the archival records of the Birmingham Education Committee the mental, emotional and behavioural assessment of immigrant, and especially black children, was considered an urgent priority. Yet this regulation of the immigrant body was complemented by a consistent concern with the movement and visibility of these bodies in the space of the city. Archival sources in the field of education suggest that many professionals accepted and actively propounded ideas about the inferiority of black immigrants. Indeed, educational professionals were among those state agents who helped to promulgate a notably anxious and acrimonious public debate in which the presence and specific location of immigrants presaged widespread fears about moral decline and the collapse of social order. This debate is not least visible in the local media.⁴⁸ Yet, and at the same time and no less sincerely, educational professionals, as was indicated above, prized their reputation for ‘racial tolerance’ and were highly sensitive to potential accusations of discrimination.

In 1962 the Birmingham Local Education Authority held a private conference discussing integration strategies for new immigrants. One prominent topic on the conference agenda was

⁴⁷ Jessica Gerrard, *Radical childhoods: Schooling and the struggle for social change*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014); Kevin Myers, *Struggles for a Past: Irish and Afro-Caribbean migrants and their histories, 1951-2000* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

⁴⁸ Grosvenor, *Assimilating identities...*

dispersal and the proposal that immigrant schoolchildren be bussed to schools across the local authority to aid the process of assimilation.⁵⁰ Delegates from the Birmingham Association of Schoolmasters, and the principal primary schoolteachers' union, already appeared united in their desire for dispersing immigrant children but gloomily noted that 'racial enclaves' had already developed in the city. 'Coloured immigrants' could not, in any case, be *forced* to integrate. In short, dispersal was desirable but unrealistic. Alongside practical problems of implementation – dispersal was judged to be too expensive and practically infeasible because of the "(...) difficulty of providing transport for children whose parents are not conversant with English notions of punctuality." The cultural component of the argument is unmistakable, but at the same time it is possible to identify a concern for British freedom and British tolerance.⁵¹ Instead of adopting dispersal as a policy the Birmingham Education Committee satisfied itself with increasing the numbers of peripatetic English teachers employed and extending the grouping of coloured children into special classes for part-time language instruction.⁵²

Two years later the possibilities for publically discussing policies of dispersal had been transformed by two events. Firstly, the publication of the CIAC Second Report recommended dispersal as a policy to be implemented in LEAs across England because "if a school has more than a certain percentage of immigrant children among its pupils the whole character and ethos of the school is altered."⁵³ This endorsed the position adopted by the Conservative Minister for Education, Sir Edward Boyle who, at the time of the publication of the report, privately and publically sympathised with parents in London expressing fears about the swamping of 'their schools'.⁵⁴ Although evidence for parental fear of immigrants is rather inconclusive, the General Election of 1964 heralded a 'substantive racialisation of political debate' and may be a key moment in the making of an ethnic populism in which new social actors identified as 'white parents', sometimes further specified as mothers, demand truth and

⁵⁰ Grosvenor, *Assimilating identities...*, 123.

⁵¹ Grosvenor, *Assimilating identities...*, 124.

⁵² Sally Tomlinson, *Race and Education: Policy and Politics in Britain: Policy and Politics in Britain*. 1 edition. (Maidenhead, England; New York: Open University Press, 2008), 30.

⁵³ Home Office, *Second Report of the Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council*, London 1964.

⁵⁴ Tomlinson, *Race and Education...*, 29; Lowe, *Education and Social Change*, 118-119.

action from politicians in order to defend their interests as whites.⁵⁵ Secondly, in 1965 the Department of Education and Science (DES) produced the important circular 7/65, *Immigration from the Commonwealth*, in which a newly elected Labour government insisted that “the task of education is the successful assimilation of immigrant children” and which, in a section entitled “spreading the children” argued that “about one third of immigrant children is the maximum that is normally acceptable in a school if social strains are to be avoided and educational standards maintained”.⁵⁶ In Birmingham, and by the late 1960s dispersal was actively supported by the National Union of Teachers and the *Birmingham Post* who supported the idea with an argument that dispersal was used in Bradford and, like other newspapers, regularly invoked the wishes of white parents as decisive considerations in discussions of educational practice.⁵⁷ The apparent consensus developing around dispersal meant that a scheme for dispersing immigrant children around secondary schools was openly adopted in the early months of 1967.⁵⁸

At primary level, however, the Birmingham Education Committee remained publically committed to its original position of responding to immigration by increasing the number of teachers, and language classes, dedicated to black immigrant children. Ian Grosvenor’s archival analysis confirms a rather different private picture. From the spring of 1967, unofficial mechanisms for dispersing black students were implemented in primary schools without any public statements being made.⁵⁹ The clandestine nature of the new policy ‘dispersal by persuasion’ as it was called in a confidential 1967 memorandum indicates that the practical implementation of the dispersal policy ran up against difficult situational logics.⁶⁰ The educational professionals represented in this local archive appeared supportive

⁵⁵ Les Back and John Solomos, *Race, Politics and Social Change*, (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 54. Historical evidence for the extent of parental concern is mixed somewhat mixed. See, for example, the contrasting reports in ‘Disperse coloured pupils plea’, *The Times*, November 9, (1956), 9; J.Barr, ‘Pakistanis in Bradford, New Society’, 19 November 1964.

⁵⁶ Grosvenor, *Assimilating identities...*, 53.

⁵⁷ Grosvenor, *Assimilating identities...*, 124; Roger Smith & Anthony Sutcliffe, *History of Birmingham*, vol. III (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 384f. See, for example, “Free Repatriation Urged For Some Immigrants.” *Times* [London, England] 7 June 1965, 5. *The Times Digital Archive*. Web. 7 Dec. 2015.

⁵⁸ BCA, Reception Centres for Immigrant Pupils Also Articles regarding Scheme for Dispersal of Immigrants (To Aug. 1967).

⁵⁹ Grosvenor, *Assimilating identities...*, 126.

⁶⁰ BCA, Registration and Medical Inspection of Immigrant Pupils [Sept 1967 – Oct 1968], Memorandum entitled “Registration, Medical Examination and Admission to Schools of Immigrant Children newly arrived in this country” dated 25 October 1967, 2.

of dispersal but, as the Chief Education Officer told a private meeting in February 1967, the “matter (i.e. dispersal) with regards to secondary education was much more straight-forward than in the case of primary education. In primary education there were strongly conflicting views for and against dispersal (...).”⁶¹ This statement is suggestive of the rather different practical questions of bussing children of different ages across an urban area. It also speaks to the complex ways in which race identities might be attributed to children and young people and the continued controversies invoked by bussing in the context of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America. At the same meeting a member of the Secondary Education Sub-Committee tried to minimize these difficulties by insisting that the

*(...) the problem of dispersal appeared needlessly difficult because of its association with the unhappy word “discrimination”; we already discriminated educationally, for example between handicapped and other children, and it was far better to look at the matter of dispersal as one not so much called for on account of colour as necessary for educational reasons – so that the teacher might provide efficient education.*⁶²

Discriminatory practice is openly recognised here but defended by silencing questions of colour and shifting the terms of discussion toward a more specialised knowledge of efficient education. Registrars at the reception centres, along with welfare and attendance officers were encouraged to persuade, but only to persuade parents, that dispersal was necessary and desirable on specifically educational grounds.⁶³ Yet, and as a memorandum from the chief education officer in April 1967 lamented, persuasion could not guarantee desirable racial mixing. “‘If you don’t like it, you can of course refuse’ ” will get us nowhere” he pondered before suggesting that constructing smaller catchment areas for schools would produce greater powers of discretion for head teachers in selecting children on grounds of colour.⁶⁴ Ultimately, however, the local authority decided not to officially or explicitly recruit head teachers to the implementation of the dispersal scheme because they remained concerned

⁶¹ BCA, Reception Centres for Immigrant Pupils Also Articles regarding Scheme for Dispersal of Immigrants (To Aug. 1967), Minutes of the Secondary Education Sub-Committee at their meeting held on 8 February 1967.

⁶² BCA, Reception Centres for Immigrant Pupils Also Articles regarding Scheme for Dispersal of Immigrants (To Aug. 1967), Minutes of the Secondary Education Sub-Committee at their meeting held on 8 February 1967.

⁶³ BCA, Registration and Medical Inspection of Immigrant Pupils [Sept 1967 – Oct 1968], Memorandum entitled “Registration, Medical Examination and Admission to Schools of Immigrant Children newly arrived in this country” dated 25 October 1967, p. 4.

⁶⁴ BCA, Reception Centres for Immigrant Pupils Also Articles regarding Scheme for Dispersal of Immigrants (To Aug. 1967), Memorandum: Chief Education Officer ‘Immigrants – Dispersal – Diversion and Limitation’ dated April 6, 1967, p. 2.

about accusations of racial segregation. In January 1968 the education authorities found that “the greatest success has been obtained in dispersing West Indian children particularly those with more intelligent parents.”⁶⁵ Overall, however, “(...) the new system of registration has not had marked success in effecting greatly improved dispersal of immigrant children (...)”⁶⁶

Schools, and their catchment areas, were important sites of contestation in debates around immigration in the 1960s. The physical location of immigrants raised acute anxieties in professional circles not least as result of concerns about culture, traditions and value. Education was seen as a mechanism to impose new order and, to homogenise, a dynamic post-war world. For this reason, professionals organised a system of assimilation. For those groups subjected to debates and policy enactments around dispersal it confirmed the importance of physical location and it anticipated some key themes in an emerging politics of recognition, in which visibility and safety, not least in schools, were key themes.

Concluding remarks

In a recent discussion of the archival dimensions of decolonization, Jordanna Bailkin points out that local state archives ‘begin to explain what was previously obscured: the interaction of global and local demands in the making of the welfare state’. Local archives, and the evidence they provide of the expansion of social services, represent a ‘new vein of sources’ which, even if they are often still classified, can give the ‘welfare state a new geography and genealogy, charting its proximity to, but also its unseen dependence on, the end of empire’. This article has begun to demonstrate that, in the city of Birmingham, the imperial logics inherent in professional thinking and practice became a catalyst for professionals’ crafting of the modern English welfare state. As educational administrators contemplated the arrival and settlement of immigrants, they saw, or they perceived, the formerly colonized appearing on English soil. This moment was often experienced in highly charged, emotional and symbolic terms, that could, for example, signal the end of history and the arrival of racial conflict.

Educational professionals could also sense this moment as one of epochal change. Imperial frames of reference were used, not exclusively but substantively, to understand and respond

⁶⁵ BCA, Registration and Medical Inspection of Immigrant Pupils [Sept 1967 – Oct 1968], Progress report written by Mr. Wood of the Byelaws department entitled “Registration of Immigrants” dated 19 January 1968.

⁶⁶ BCA, Registration and Medical Inspection of Immigrant Pupils [Sept 1967 – Oct 1968], Progress report written by Mr. Wood of the Byelaws department entitled “Registration of Immigrants” dated January 19, 1968.

to immigrants arriving in English schools. In their concern for ‘embodied deficiencies’ and the - conscious or unconscious - organisation of ‘a melting pot of assimilation’, educational professionals drew on social sciences closely linked to the British Empire – of anthropology, sociology and race relations – and used them to mark out and patrol the boundaries of unacceptable otherness. The immigrant child, and the child’s background, were consistently presented as educational problems and as the cause of both poor academic attainment and a more intangible unwillingness to assimilate. To be sure, the boundaries of unacceptable otherness were not fixed. Professionals in different positions could construct elastic and negotiable lines but skin colour, and the perceived qualities of white populations, came to separate two social taxonomy continuums between recognition and disdain; one continuum for white populations and one continuum for those counted as black. The worst category of both continuums is the unruly, insubordinate, unintelligent, educational underachiever from a broken home. While the best category of the ‘black’ continuum is the orderly, abiding, intelligent, achieving, assimilated child from a stable home. Indeed, and despite a professional philosophy of social amelioration, garnished with values of non-discrimination, racialised statements and categorisations surfaced so regularly that it might be appropriate to regard them as inherent values of the state’s symbolic capital reproduced, shaped in the professionals’ interventions and testifying to the symbiotic relationship between state and professional. Thus, a picture of an imperial welfare state begin to emerge.